



## We're back in the 16<sup>th</sup> District

I'm pleased to be back from Olympia and home in our district. My legislative office in Walla Walla has reopened. I am proud that our district provides a bipartisan local office to its constituents. You may contact me, or my colleagues, Rep. Bill Grant and Sen. Mike Hewitt, at our 16<sup>th</sup> District legislative office.

### 16<sup>th</sup> District Office

26 E Main St. #5  
Walla Walla, WA 99367  
(509) 527-4111  
mastin\_da@leg.wa.gov

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# Rep. Dave Mastin 2002 Session Review

*To citizens of the 16<sup>th</sup> District, in Asotin, Columbia, Franklin, Garfield and Walla Walla counties*



Dear Friends,

The 2002 legislative session wrapped up on schedule after 60 days. And while I'm pleased with some of the specific laws adopted by the Legislature and Gov. Locke, I'm disappointed with the overall results of this legislative session.

Writing the state budget is the Legislature's primary responsibility. Implied in that responsibility is the expectation it will develop a budget that is fiscally responsible and self-sustaining into the future. Personally, I believe lawmakers did not live up to that expectation.

State budget writers used credit-card spending to escape Olympia. The budget they adopted actually spends **\$1.4 billion more than revenues** this biennium. Budget writers acknowledge that this leaves our state over \$1 billion in the red for the next biennium.

On the brighter side, there was incremental progress made on other issues, including passage of an anti-bullying policy for our schools and the expansion of Promise Scholarships to help hard working students pay for college.

My thanks to those of you who have taken the time to communicate with me by sharing your ideas and concerns about state government. It is an honor to serve you, and I look forward to our continued work together to improve the quality of life we enjoy here in southeast Washington.

Sincerely,

Dave Mastin  
Your state representative



*Jairo Ramirez, a student at Garrison Middle School, served as an honorary page in Olympia during the 2002 legislative session.*

## My thanks to local teens

I'd like to thank the following local students whom I sponsored as legislative pages in Olympia during the 2002 session. I am a big fan of the legislative page program, which offers a great learning experience for students throughout the state. Contact my office if you'd like an application to serve as a page in 2003.

### 2002 16<sup>th</sup> District Pages

- Jason Shadler, Pasco High School
- Michael Tompkins, DeSales High School
- Ashley Mastin, Garrison Middle School
- Jairo Ramirez, Garrison Middle School

# Rep. Dave Mastin

## 2002 Session Review



### *State budget questionable*

This year the Legislature was unwilling to face budget realities and bring spending in line with tax revenues. This problem began last year, in 2001, when the Democrat budget spent \$700 million more than revenue received.

This year Democrat budget writers drafted a new plan that compounds the problem. The budget increases spending 7 percent over the previous biennium, while doubling the deficit spending to \$1.4 billion more than anticipated revenue.

### *Tobacco settlement fund diverted by Democrat budget*

Washington won a hard fought litigation against the tobacco companies. Under the settlement, Washington receives 4.5 billion over 25 years. This money was originally earmarked for tobacco awareness education and health care costs. Not anymore.

The Democrat budget sells our right to the \$4.5 billion in exchange for a one-time cash payment to "balance" the budget for 14 months. We will still face a \$1 billion shortfall at the start of the next biennium.

I agree with the state treasurer and attorney general who both have said this strategy is irresponsible. It's like a family that decides to sell off its pension for up-front cash to cover a couple of monthly expenditures. What do you do in three months? What do you do when you retire?

### *Don't take my word for it . . .*

Here is what others are saying about the approach used by the Legislature to put together the state budget:

*"a bad deal for Washington taxpayers"*

– Democrat Attorney General Christine Gregoire

*"terrible fiscal policy"*

– Democrat State Treasurer Mike Murphy

*"They knew it (the budget) was at least \$1 billion out of whack when they left."*

– Democrat State Auditor Brian Sonntag

*"shameful"*

– Tri-City Herald editorial (4/5/02)

*"foolish way for state to pay bills"*

– Walla Walla Union-Bulletin editorial (3/8/02)

*"too big a gamble for the state"*

– News Tribune editorial (3/6/02)

*"not sustainable"*

– Spokesman-Review editorial (3/6/02)

*"a disservice to our state's taxpayers"*

– Bremerton Sun editorial (3/8/02)

*"suspect budgeting"*

– Yakima Herald-Republic editorial (3/10/02)

*"we'll pay a high price for this gimmick"*

– South County Journal editorial (3/14/02)

### *Public safety compromised in state budget*

Since the elimination of the motor vehicle excise tax, the state has provided funding to local government to help pay for public safety needs, such as the hiring of police officers, deputies and fire fighters. This support for public safety in our communities has always been a legislative priority – until this session.

The 2002 budget drastically cuts public safety and emergency services funding for cities and counties. We introduced several amendments that would have preserved this critical funding, but our proposals were rejected by the majority party.

Two years ago, lawmakers made a bipartisan commitment to fund local public safety services on an ongoing basis. This budget doesn't meet that commitment.





*To citizens of the 16<sup>th</sup> District, in Asotin, Columbia, Franklin, Garfield and Walla Walla counties*

## Successes and disappointments in 2002

*Here's a look at some other issues that were addressed during the 2002 session*



### ***Safety for students in school***

Lawmakers approved a bill, which I co-sponsored, that will improve safety for our children in public schools. Many of our schools are doing a great job, but others are not up to speed. House Bill 1444 requires school districts to develop or improve anti-bullying policies to protect students. This bill will help ensure that our schools provide an environment where children can learn without the threat of violence or intimidation.



### ***Civil service bill contains pitfalls***

Historically the Legislature has set state worker salaries and benefits as part of the budget process. This allows for significant public overview and input, and it also requires that lawmakers consider all state programs that compete for limited state funds.

Under a law adopted this year, the governor and leaders of the state employee unions will meet **behind closed doors** to decide the salary and benefit increases for state workers **before** the budget is developed.

Unfortunately, this creates the appearance of impropriety. The unions may be among the largest campaign contributors to the governor. Immediately after the elections, the governor and union leaders meet to decide salary and benefit increases for state workers.

Furthermore, setting salaries and benefits before we develop a budget puts state workers' salaries and benefits first in line, ahead of all other state services, including education, higher education, senior programs, food banks, etc. This is not the right priority. Our state workers deserve fair compensation, but what is considered "fair" must be determined within the context of all government expenditures.



### ***Promise Scholarships for high achieving students***

Lawmakers enacted the new Promise Scholarship program, which provides tuition assistance for the first two years of college for low- and middle-income students who finish in the top 15 percent of their class or score 1,200 or more on their SATs. This rewards students who achieve academic success through hard work.



### ***Failed to expand job opportunities***

The Legislature missed a great opportunity to improve the economic climate in our state. Last year, the governor convened the Competitiveness Council (a group of top business leaders and policymakers) to recommend several state policy changes that would help create jobs and improve the opportunity for local businesses to survive and grow. Despite great fanfare, the Legislature virtually ignored the Competitiveness Council's recommendations. We cannot control many economic factors, but that is a poor excuse for failing to act on those factors we do control.



***Rep. Mastin serves as Deputy Republican Leader, the number two ranking member on the House Republican leadership team.***

## ***Transportation tax increase goes to voters***

After two years of negotiations a transportation tax package will go before the voters in November. It includes the following:

- A 9-cent gas tax increase phased in over two years
- A 1 percent increase in the sales tax on new and used cars
- A 30 percent increase in weight fees for trucks

Among the local projects that would be funded by this revenue package would be the design work to widen Highway 12 between Wallula and Walla Walla, as well as the construction of additional lanes between the Tri-Cities and Wallula.

The law prohibits me from using this newsletter to advocate or oppose this upcoming ballot measure. But if you have additional questions about this transportation funding plan, you may contact me at my 16th District legislative office.

# Rep. Dave Mastin

## 2002 Session Review



### Join me at a Town Hall Meeting

Please join me at one of my upcoming town hall meetings May 4-6 here in the 16<sup>th</sup> District. I'll provide a brief overview of the 2002 session, discuss issues of concern, and answer any questions you may have regarding state government.

*Please mark you calendar and plan to attend one of these meetings:*

#### 16<sup>th</sup> District Town Hall Meetings

##### Saturday, May 4

**Burbank – 3-5 p.m.**

Columbia High School Commons  
787 Maple St.

**Walla Walla – 6-8 p.m.**

Port of Walla Walla  
conference room  
310 "A" Street  
(across from the WW Regional Airport)

##### Sunday, May 5

**Dayton – 3-5 p.m.**

Youth Building  
Columbia County Fairgrounds

**Waitsburg – 6-8 p.m.**

Ye Towne Hall  
121 Main Street

##### Monday, May 6

**Pasco – 7:15-9 p.m.**

Franklin County Courthouse  
Commissioners Chambers  
Rm. 201, 1016 N. 4th Ave.

*Hope to see you there!*

- Balancing the Budget
- Protecting Jobs
- Solving Transportation

**INSIDE:**

**Rep. Dave Mastin**

P.O. Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504

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